DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 547 JC 960 097

AUTHOR Chitwood, James P.
TITLE Sensitizing Community College Personnel through Customer Service Training.
INSTITUTION Okaloosa-Walton Community Coll., Niceville, FL.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 45p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Planning; Community Colleges; *Educational Quality; *Institutional Mission; Mission Statements; *Organizational Development; Organizational Objectives; Staff Development; Staff Role; *Student Personnel Services; Teacher Role; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Customer Satisfaction; Customer Services; *Okaloosa Walton Community College FL

ABSTRACT

Educational institutions rank second among the largest service industries in the United States with more than 9.1 million employees. Unfortunately, higher education institutions have shown a lack of orientation towards clientele service. Okaloosa-Walton Community College (OWCC), a comprehensive college enrolling approximately 16,000 students annually in Florida, recognizes its role as a service provider in its mission statement, but has no specific policy or training related to customer service. While a February 1991 survey of customer satisfaction at OWCC indicated that customers/students were satisfied with the treatment and level of service they received, negative responses were received. To ensure that quality customer service is provided, OWCC and other community colleges should consider the following initiatives: (1) prepare a set of statements that present the college's philosophy and expectations for effective customer relations; (2) design a method to assess the level of customer service and monitor customer service trends; (3) clarify roles and responsibility of faculty, administration, and staff in regard to customer relations and articulate a customer communication plan; (4) build an institutional identity and expectations about customer service through human resource management's recruitment, selection, hiring, and orientation with new personnel; (5) emphasize training to develop employees knowledge, skills, and attitudes in customer service; and (6) communicate attention toward customer relations and supply feedback on how the institution is accomplishing its service objectives. Contains 36 references. The student survey results are appended. (TGI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 391 547

SENSITIZING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERSONNEL THROUGH CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Chitwood

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

by:

James P. Chitwood

Director of Institutional Resource Development

Okaloosa-Walton Community College

JC 960 047

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Background: Agents of Public Purpose..... 2

Bureaucracy's Goals Versus Sensitivity..... 5

Education: A Service Role to Fill..... 6

Service in an Evolving Environment..... 7

Examining a College's Customer Service..... 10

Service as a Purpose and Goal..... 11

External Dealings With Students..... 13

Measuring Up With Students..... 14

Internal Service: Great Expectations..... 16

A Service Prescription for Change..... 18

Building an Attitude of Service..... 19

Training, Training, Training.....21

Using the Process Toward Service..... 23

Recognition and Service Measures..... 24

Implications and Prospects.....26

Bibliography and References.....28

Appendices..... ii

Sensitizing Community College Personnel Through Customer Service Training

Introduction

The environment of public higher education is not immune to complaints about its delivery of customer service. In the case of a two-year community college, responsiveness to the public which supports the institution can miss the mark when it comes to customer service for its primary clientele--students--and others who look to an assortment of college personnel for solutions to a plethora of problems.

Not unlike their counterparts in the private sector, public sector employees are faced with customers who not only want solutions to their particular problem but also want service with a sense of commitment, personal attention and quality. In fact, there is a perception that because public sector employees "work for me" their services should be provided even more expeditiously.

On the other hand, there is the "monopoly factor." It asserts that because the service provided by a specific public agency is often the only game in town, the public perceives an attitude of "you don't care about me." It is in this arena, where a decline in public confidence and trust in government already exists, that the public employee walks a tightrope, attempting to perform a service delivery balancing act.

This research project examines what must be done by community college personnel and the institution to achieve the goal

of improved customer service. Using the expectancy model described by Lawler as modified by Teasley and Gibson (1991), the analysis will require at least two levels of interpretation: one of the clientele--the students--and the other of the institution's personnel. Providing coping skills need for dealing with the public is clearly a function of both training and motivation. Training and development impact the traits and abilities of employees. The reinforcement element of the model comes into play through work assignments and rewards potentially realized through training.

In analyzing how a higher education institution can turn around the "you don't care" perception in the public's mind, this paper examined what stands in the way both, externally and internally of improving customer service, how it can be changed and what the payoffs are for the community college with improved customer relations. Using open-ended interviews, literature research and surveys, this paper assesses the customer service response of college students and proposes a training program with evaluation measures to determine the degree of improvement of customer service at the college.

Background: Agents of Public Purpose

There is a prevailing image of government organizations and government employees as indifferent to needs of the public, ineffective, and inefficient. Add to this charges that public

employees lack motivation and are concerned only about job security, and it becomes painfully clear that government lacks the confidence of the public. This is not a new phenomenon. According to Perry and Wise (1990), beginning in the mid-1960s, public confidence in American institutions began a two-decade decline. "Nowhere," they observe, "is the decline in public trust more apparent than in government."

It is argued by Albrecht (1988) that many government workers, consciously or unconsciously, perceive themselves as being "in positions of bureaucratic influence over the public rather than at the disposal of the public." He contends:

> "It isn't necessary for government entities to give good service. No survival factor operates the thinking of government managers, such as there is for those in charge of commercial enterprises. If a hotel gives lousy service, the customer votes with his or her money and takes the patronage elsewhere. But seldom does a government organization, regardless of its charter, have any compelling reason to serve (p. 8)."

Further, Albrecht maintains that the public sector's permanent guarantee of existence, with no predatory forces in the organization's environment, breeds the indifference the public often experiences in the level service it receives.

Citing what they term the core values of personnel, Klingner and Nalbandian (1985, p. 23) note that the "value of responsiveness assumes a premier moral quality. Government is assessed in terms of how effectively it responds to and represents the people." Thus, it is contended that responsiveness should somehow outweigh efficiency in the public's ultimate tally. According to Gordon

(1986, p. 600), popular perceptions of government which have fueled the diminished public trust include such dysfunctional views as: public programs are counterproductive to the social and economic well-being of the country; the public no longer expects public programs to work; public programs are better administered at the state and local level and the function should ultimately be taken over by the private sector; and public sector managers are overpaid and any system of rewards in the public sector will be abused.

Bureaucracy's Goals Versus Sensitivity

While bureaucratic ineptitude and insensitivity cannot always be excused, Downs and Larkey (1986) blame repeated tampering within the public sector by reformers trying to transform government using efficient and effective techniques borrowed from the private sector. Their basic premise is that government cannot and perhaps should not imitate the private sector. Among the reasons cited are the public sector's limits on authority, the shorter time horizons confronting bureaucrats, and the fact the government's goals are different in kind and content. Downs and Larkey note:

> "Government bureaucracies are not only often expected to achieve conflicting goals but are also frequently assigned task no one inside or outside government know how to accomplish...Government goals aren't chosen on the basis of what can be done but on what should be done" (p. 3).

While this view should serve to diminish the "you work for me"

perception, the sniping at public sector employees has had the impact, whether intentionally or not, of driving individuals out of public service. As Romzek (1990) and others observe, public service is at risk because it is losing some of its best people to alternative employment.

In attempting to balance the twin yokes of accountability and responsiveness, government does leave the public confused and bewildered. This then becomes the basis for the "monopoly factor" which leaves the public with the perception that it has no power or recourse in its dealings with the keepers of government services. Stahl notes this is almost inevitable because of the size, complexity and impersonal nature of government. Although it can make sensitivity difficult to attain, Stahl asserts:

> "Most government managers are mindful of the necessity to lean over backwards to maintain a 'service' attitude...They are not owners of authority but agents of public purpose. They understand why representatives of the people must be listened to, why public employees must be inspired with a sense of mission...At the same time they sense their obligation to consider all sides, to think about the interests of those not immediately pressing their cases as well as those who are, and to insure the utmost impartiality of their staffs" (p. 3).

The responsiveness, along with accountability, thus becomes dependent on what Stahl contends are the selection, training and motivation of public servants from executives down to those who deal most frequently with the average citizen. His prescription goes beyond simply ability, knowledge, execution of the law and ethical behavior. It must involve a "capacity to sense the needs

of others, adaptability to change and the ability to relate one's own functions in proper perspective to others" (p. 4). In short, public sector employees must be interested enough to know where in the governmental maze some need can be met and to facilitate its getting done.

Education: A Service Role to Fill

Educational institutions rank second among the nine largest service industries in the U.S. according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report on Employment and Earnings (Chart 1) with more than 9.1 million employees. This ranking puts education even ahead of such service delivery systems as both health care and general government.

Unfortunately, higher education also is among the public sector agencies that Albrecht describes as highly structured, rule-oriented organizations suffering from "organizational arthritis" (p. 67) when it comes to service delivery. Typical of such organizations are those which "place compliance above common sense, policy above people, and rule above reason." Characteristic are the minimal degree of autonomy and discretion on the part of front line employees whose routine, repetitive work has conditioned them into a "one best way" of working and thinking.

While the foregoing description may seem a stinging indictment of education institutions in general, Haag-Mutter and Jones (1988) maintain that personnel administration in today's two-year colleges

THE NINE LARGEST SERVICE INDUSTRIES (1986)

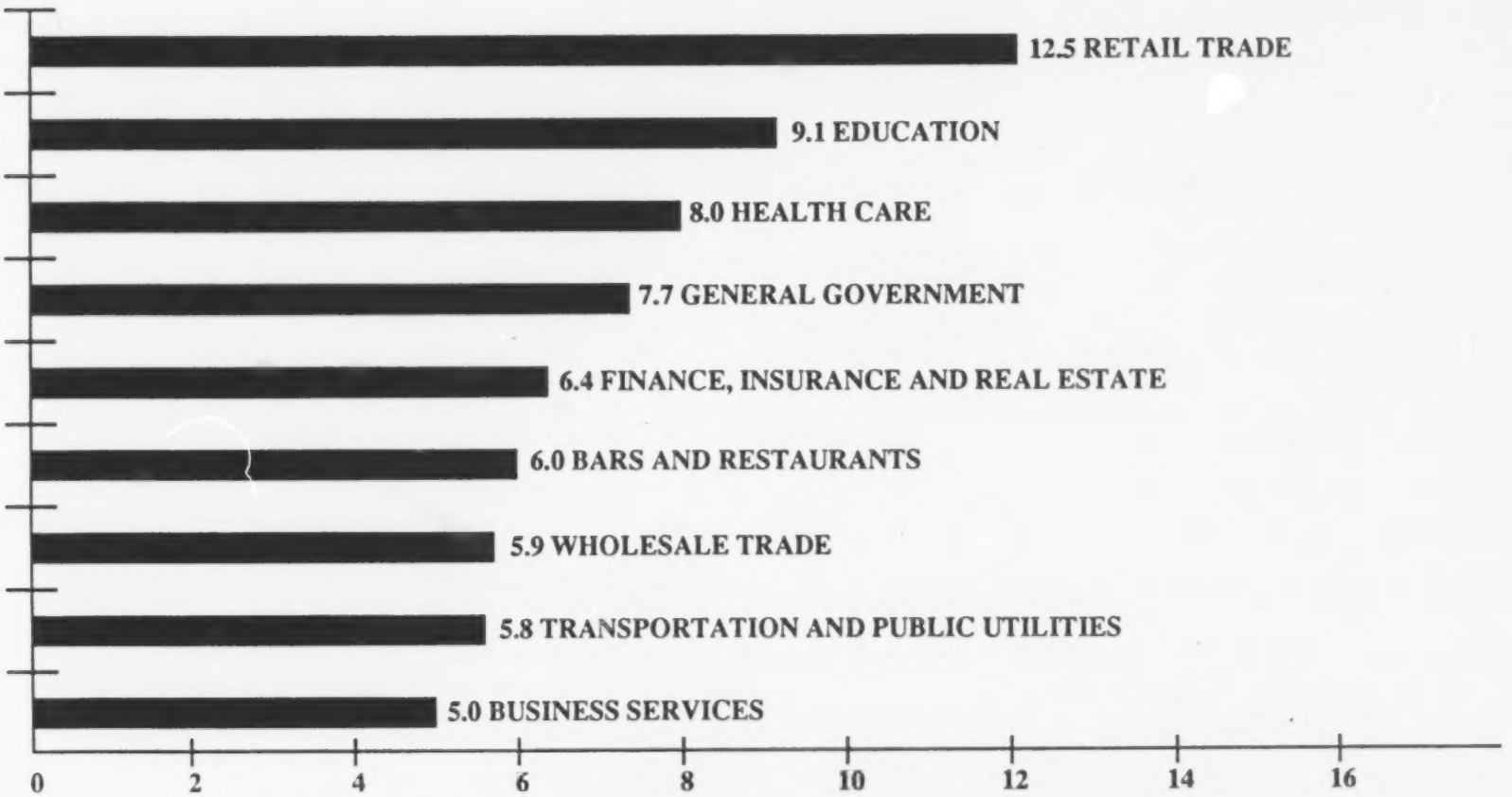


CHART 1

Source: Derived from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,
Employment and Earnings, January, 1987

has tended to develop a pattern of employer-employee relationships very similar to that in business and industry. They contend, however, that there are important differences between an institution of higher education and business enterprise:

> "Business and industry exist for profit. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that more effective management of human resources increases profits, management has reason to give its solid support to this area of administration...A second big difference between higher education and business and industry is that central administration in two-year colleges often has some difficulty translating management thinking into action...This difficulty is brought about because the typical administrative head of an academic department is interested primarily in his or her academic specialty; achieving success as a business manager or supervisor is only a secondary desire, if it is a desire at all" (p. 4).

Finley (1988) further notes that college administrators must recognize the differences between their own institution and private industry. "First, higher education is not oriented toward products or services for profit. Second teaching is difficult to measure. Third, faculty members, administrators, and staff members all perform distinct duties" (p. 78).

With the absence in higher education of a participatory environment, a lack of accord on its product, but an abundance of vested interests, it is little wonder colleges and universities grappled with the customer service. Finley cites Holt and Wagner (1983) research which observed that support departments of colleges resemble departments in the private sector. These include physical plant, finance office, registrar's office and bookstore, all of which impact the internal as well as external service delivery

element of a community college.

It has been asserted that values and beliefs, along with professional education, can stand in the way of workers adopting a service-oriented attitude. Thus, the highly trained professionals filling a variety of faculty, administrative and even staff positions in colleges and universities can have difficulty thinking of themselves in a service role.

As Albrecht notes:

> "Educators may be the last people to adopt a service orientation toward people they are suppose to serve. The educational systems in the western world have been in the hands of government for so long that they have become like most other government services--bureaucratized and institutionalized. To suggest that the learners, and those who are paying for the education of the learners, are customers draws a blank look from traditional educators. Those who take this unusual attitude are vastly outnumbered by those who think of the educational institution as a permanent fixture and the students as merely passers-by who flow through the system and leave money behind" (p. 74).

With this lack of orientation toward clientele service, it should not be surprising that research shows higher education institutions have not placed a premium on human resource development. Marciano and Kello (1990) point out that compared to the business sector it is modeled after higher education has been lax to place emphasis on management development programming. In their research, they note that "staff training is still generally not carried out in a structured and systematic way in colleges and universities, as it is in other types of organizations" (p. 41).

Service in an Evolving Environment

The environment within which community colleges are expected to provide customer services is changing and evolving. Trends in student population, technology, and funding will simultaneously push an ever-growing higher education system to improve services to clientele as well as heighten the need for some type of training which can assure payoffs for external as well as internal customer service.

Among the clientele responses facing community colleges externally, according to Haag-Mutter and Jones (p. 6), will be the dependence on more part-time faculty who must buy fulltime into the college's service philosophy; motivationally equipping faculty and staff to service the problems, deficiencies and learning styles of "non-traditional" older student population; keeping a workforce technologically proficient when the demand for services is required by the public; and a budgetary climate, driven by the public's demand for less taxes, which emphasizes two-year colleges be more effective with less dollars.

While a higher education institution is apt to be conscious of the more visible external customer service issues, a community college may find what stands in its way of serving clientele is the breakdown or failure of its internal customer service. The behind-the-scenes functions of everything from data processing or purchasing to supply services or personnel can impinge on another department and its customer service capacity.

According to Albrecht's "internal service triangle" (p. 136),

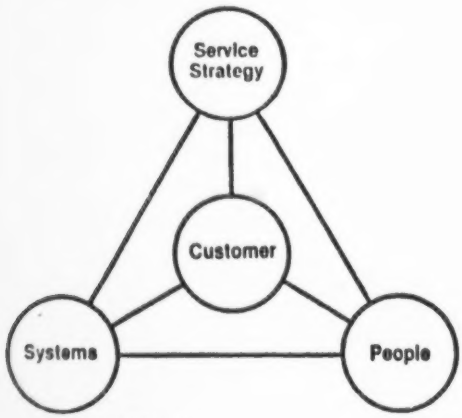
like his external customer "service triangle" (p. 31) relations, employees become the "customer" of management (See Chart 2). The three elements necessary in order for management to gain their commitment to service are a culture which emphasizes customer service; leadership which demonstrates attention toward employees' needs as people; and an organization which supports employees through procedures, policies, physical facilities and other systems necessary for the task.

It is within this changing and often contradictory environment that higher education seeks answers to sensitizing its workforce to improve customer service. How do institutions of higher education instill a "customer first" attitude in the employees who have the least at stake in terms of the organization's image? How should institutions proceed when they depend on their lowest paid employees to make a positive first impression on the public? Disney World has done an excellent job in this regard, but can institutions of higher education follow suit?

Examining a College's Customer Service

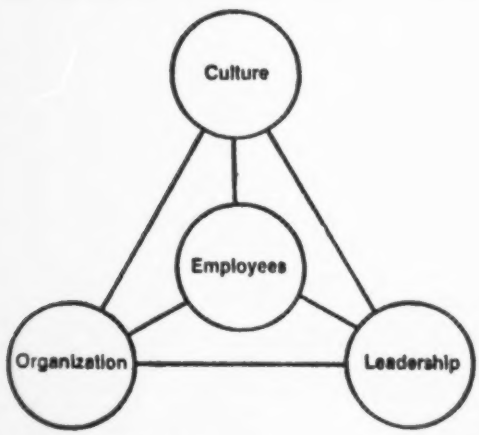
In examining customer service in higher education, this paper has chosen to look specifically at Okaloosa-Walton Community College, a medium-size, two-year public institution with locations in Okaloosa and Walton counties of Northwest Florida. The college serves approximately 16,000 students annually from its main campus in Niceville and its education centers in Fort Walton Beach,

FIGURE 2–1
The Service Triangle



© 1984, Karl Albrecht.

FIGURE 8–1
The Internal Service Triangle



• 1987, Karl Albrecht.

DeFuniak Springs, Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field Air Force Base. Additionally, the college works with clientele in various community locations as well as in business and industry sites.

A comprehensive community college, OWCC has a fulltime staff of 225 personnel. This includes professional faculty, administrators, and career service employees. Additionally, the college has more than 400 part-time faculty members. The two-county district served by OWCC has a diverse population of approximately 200,000. The average age of the OWCC student is 30 years, reflecting the trend of community colleges nationwide of serving older student. The college is tax-supported. It also realizes other revenues from tuition, fees, grants and private contributions.

Organizationally, the president serves as the college's chief executive officer. There are three deans who report to the president; the Dean of Instruction, the Dean of Technical Education and Economic Development, and the Dean of Administrative Services. An organizational chart of the institution is attached (See Appendix).

Service as a Purpose and Goal

The college's role as a service provider is recognized in OWCC's mission statement and goals. The purpose notes that the college is "committed to quality educational programs and services providing the opportunity for students to achieve their goals and for satisfying community needs." Among the institutional goals are

"to provide student and community services and activities that enhance the quality of educational life."

However, there is neither a philosophy nor a policy specifically stating the college's intent regarding customer service. The closest the college comes to any such statement is contained in the Staff and Program Development Plan (1990). One goal of the plan is to "establish an environment based on an interest in the student and a commitment to student success at the institution." The accompanying objectives for the goal are:

* "Review strengths and weaknesses of the institution as they relate to service students administratively and instructionally.
* Provide programs and services to enhance the ability of staff members to deal with students in a successful way.

At least tangentially, then, the college has devised some measures of effectiveness for how well it responds to the student clientele and how well college employees are to be trained for the task of meeting customer service needs.

Still, college administrators concede there is not a clearly specified statement or institutional attitude toward customer service. According to one administrator, "We talk about it. We stress it. We just haven't put in written form." Another administrator acknowledges there is "no collegewide effort (targeted at customer service). That needs to be done." The college's director of student services observes:

> "Student services takes policy, rules and regulations and translates them into human terms. One major problem is they don't come to us until there is a problem or crisis."

Likewise, training in the area of customer service has not received either organizational attention or emphasis at the college. OWCC is authorized under state statute to use up to 2 percent of the Community College Program Fund allocation to finance its Staff and Program Development efforts. These funds, which have been spent on training and upgrading of skills, are awarded institutionwide on a competitive basis. The college's business office, as an example, has used the funds to send employees to workshop on "consumer-oriented activities." But more than one administrator admits that customer service training has "not been a priority."

If there is a paradox to the lack of training provided specifically for the institutional staff, the college promotes and is well recognized in the community for its ability to provide local business and industry with job-specific training and other courses to upgrade employee skills. Ironically, one such workshop the college offers to the general public is a seminar on customer service.

External Dealings with Students

While the community college is widely recognized for being accessible and affordable, OWCC does not have a lock on the market. There are three other higher education institutions

locally in competition with OWCC for students. Therefore, the college does not necessarily fit into the "monopoly factor" notion of being the only higher education institution available to clientele. Consequently, it would be difficult to accept the contention that customers of the college face a "don't care" or "we don't need you" attitude from faculty or staff.

Because the college and its centers are geographically spread across two counties there are multiple points of contact with student customers. On the main campus alone, customers service can be identified in a variety of areas from admissions and business office cashiers to food services and the library services. Outlying centers are linked electronically enabling center workers to respond to student customer requests for course availability and other records. Counseling services has been achieved at the centers as well as specific times when other services such as financial aid advisors are available. However, the centers lack library resources and food services found at the main campus.

Measuring Up With Students

A February 1991 survey appears to support the position that customer/students at OWCC are satisfied with the treatment and level of service they receive from the college, its faculty and non-teaching personnel. As part of the research for this paper, the standardized ACT Student Opinion Survey (Two-Year College Form) was administered to 195 students. The students who participated in the survey were chosen at random from classes which included public

safety, business education, and industrial education.

The ACT Student Opinion Survey was chosen because it explores the perceptions of enrolled students on the institution's programs and services. The survey registered students' level of satisfaction with 20 colleges services, including counseling, financial aid, food service, library services, parking facilities, attitude of teaching staff and attitude of non-teaching personnel. The survey also examined levels of satisfaction with the college environment ranging from rules and policies to registration and facilities. Selected categories of responses are contained in the Appendix.

In general, the survey reveals students give the college high marks. A distinct majority in every category expressed either "very satisfied" or "satisfied " with the college's services.

This survey had been preceded by a December 1990 telephone poll conducted by the Department of Student Services. The survey used the names of 2,153 students who were registered for the Fall 1990 semester but who had not registered for the Spring 1991 term. Of 807 calls attempted, 289 students were contacted. Of the latter total, 31 had registrations on "hold;" 14 indicated they already had registered; and 88 indicated they would register in January prior to the start of the spring term.

Like the Student Opinion Survey, the Student Services Poll again found highly favorable responses to college services. Among the total of 159 responses to the question "How Could OWCC Improves Its Services to Students," the majority expressed a positive

reaction to services and suggested no changes. The open-ended replies did elicit a smattering of negative responses. Included among these were: faculty availability after-hours, counseling, food services for night students, bookstore hours, the lack of certain courses, the lack of courses at certain sites, and hours of registration.

A word of caution about such surveys and polls is offered by Karabatsos (1991), citing the work by Goodman: "Most companies conduct an annual 'Do you love us?' survey, where 85 percent of customer respond that they are 'more or less satisfied.' Management then goes back to business as usual. The problem is that a customer who is 'somewhat satisfied' is often 15 percent less loyal."

Internal Service: Great Expectations

Building the appropriate organizational and personnel arrangements internally has been shown to positively affect customer service. As previously noted, a community college is like a business with businesslike departments. In this regard, OWCC is no different. The college's internal service system has been subjected to various the tugs and pulls typical of governmental entities. State revenue shortfalls have precipitated funding cutbacks. A college-imposed hiring freeze and the prospect of reductions in force have tested the limits of the internal service system.

An internal effort to consolidate student service functions

was accomplished during 1990. Until then, admissions, counseling, financial aid were scattered in various offices. Not only was this an external service problem for the student/customer, but there was a lack of cohesiveness among the student service personnel. The availability of a building, however, permitted student services to pull virtually all its function into single facility. The "one-stop" student service center solved an external service problem, but equally important, it created more harmonious, responsive internal service personnel.

Meeting internal customer expectations, those inter-relationships within the college where a department never deals with an outside customer, can and do impact the front-line contact with the student/customer.

The internal service dilemma for a college or any organization, as described by Albrecht (p. 142), is drawing a distinction between activities and contributions. The difference between what departments "do" and what they "contribute" can be essential because it determines what service is valuable and thus becomes a priority.

As an example internal customer linkage, if college registration is approaching, production of a schedule of classes becomes imperative. Academic departments, in concert with faculty members, budgetary considerations and facilities planners, develop course offerings for the next semester so that student/customers have a schedule of classes. Registration times and days are coordinated with education centers and appropriate

staffing for counseling and financial aid workers. Preparation of a printed schedule is coordinated with the media services office, graphic services and the purchasing department which ensures publication for distribution to student/customers.

Internally, a variety of college departments have interacted to communicate with the organization's users. The departments have gone through what some might describe as an exercise of activities. The ultimate contribution becomes servicing student/customer with class schedules. The interdependent alignment reflected here is necessary, according to Pastor and Gechtman (1991). They assert that departments work at satisfying other departments before the ultimate goal of satisfying the external customer can occur.

Creating the internal service culture within the college requires what Pastor and Gechtman contend is cultivation of a team that thinks of fellow workers as customers.

> "The responsibility for keeping in touch with one's internal customers lies with the individuals of a department...[Department heads should] avoid being the middle-man and get employees to talk directly with people they should be working with....Encourage employees to work at cementing interdepartmental relationships by finding ways to help each other. (p. 10)"

The community college, like private sector companies struggling to compete, must focus on team-building and teamwork. Team-building skills can be learned and a team player attitude can be instilled, nurtured and continually enhances. Accomplishing this is the job of administrators at all levels throughout the college.

A Service Prescription for Change

An institutional understanding of the service role of the community college and the development of a "service management" philosophy are the initial steps an organization like OWCC must take toward building a customer service orientation. Service management, according to Albrecht (p. 21), seeks to build a service culture that makes excellent service to the customer a recognized mission for everyone in the organization.

In proposing an integrated system of policies, programs and initiatives focusing on customer service, Sobel and Hines (1990) suggest the following components which are adapted for use by the college:

* A set of statements that present the college's philosophy and expectations for effective customer relations.
* An assessment method must be used to measure the current level of customer service to serve as a base for determining the impact of other system element and monitor customer service trends.
* Clarify roles and responsibility of faculty, administration and staff personnel in regards to customer relations and articulate a customer communication plan.
* Build an institutional identity with and expectations about customer service through human resource management's recruitment, selection, hiring, and orientation with new personnel.
* Emphasize training to develop employees knowledge, skills and attitudes in customer service.
* Communicate attention toward customer relations and and supply feedback on how the institution is accomplishing its service objectives.

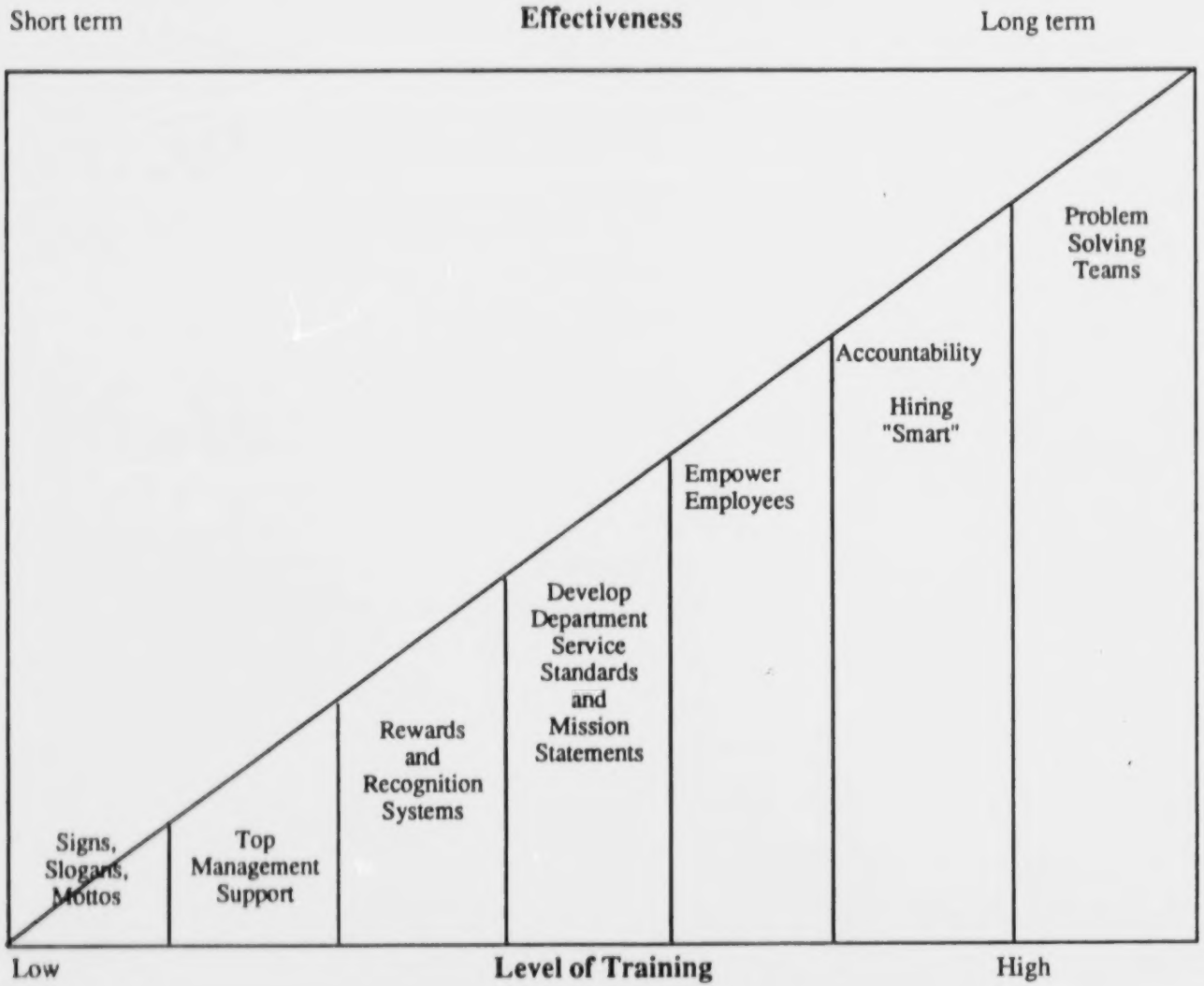
The steps toward establishing the college's customer service base can perhaps be better visualized in the "Service Excellence" diagram (Chart 3) prescribed by Total Development Resources Inc. The chart essentially reasserts the elements set forth by Sobel and Hines. The impact on customer service and service excellence are directly proportional to the level of service-oriented training the college personnel receive. With the minimal value given slogans and signs, it is suggested here that the college eliminate this step or merely incorporate within a later step. It is then that college personnel would be attuned and more likely to live up to the expectations associated with such slogans.

Building an Attitude of Service

Since a community college must be viewed as a service agency, actions of its personnel can affect the image of service a student receives. As noted by Rafaeli (1989), service employees at a college can be important to promoting organizational goals. Employees' perceptions of the organization they work for are closely related to the quality of service that the organization provides.

If the institution is to sensitize its personnel to customer service, Romzek (p. 375) contends public agencies, such as community colleges, must be sensitive to the dynamics of cultivating employee contributions. Achieving the motivation of college personnel toward customer service, thus, may depend on what Romzek terms as workers' feelings of investments in the

SERVICE EXCELLENCE



20-a

CHART 3

© 1990 Total Development Resources, Inc.

organization (i.e. inducements like pay, benefits, career opportunities) and feelings of commitment.

Because public higher education's response to investments is constrained by legislative mandates, the college administration often has little latitude. Therefore, nurturing the commitment of college personnel may have better prospects for service payoffs. As Romzek notes (p. 377), committed employees care what happens to the organization, are self-motivated to do their best for the organization and are willing to perform above and beyond the call of duty. Observes Romzek:

> "Employee commitment is an organizational tie that public managers can facilitate whether or not legislatures take action to improve inducements ...Agencies and their managers cannot completely control the employee commitment process either, but they can have some influence on the phenomenon. (p. 381)"

Another ingredient in building the attitude for customer service is that college personnel from the maintenance man to the chemistry professor must think of and treat each student as an appreciating asset (Peters, 1988). While a community college may have the student as a customer for as little as two years, the level of service the student receives can gain the institution a life-long customer. Notes Peters:

> "The well-served customer...is an appreciating asset. Every small act on her or his behalf ups the odds for repeat business, add-on business, and priceless word-of-mouth referral. (p. 122)"

Additionally, benefits of service may accrue to the college

much later when that student/customer, now a successful businessperson or retiree, decides to make a financial gift or leave their estate the institution because of the treatment received years before at the college.

Training, Training, Training

As noted by Sylvia and Meyer (1990, p.136), all training for a public agency such as a higher education institution should be designed and implemented with a special concern for its relevance to the mission of the organization. Likewise Stahl observes:

> "...[I]n any system of service to the public there is a natural concern by that public that not only in what functions are performed but in how they are performed and especially how people are used to promote that performance. (p. 28)"

Thus, the community college has an accountability function along with the responsiveness function. The "hiring smart" aspect of accountability is touted by Mescon and Mescon (1987) in respect to training. They observe that what an organization does with those it recruits, selects and trains is often more critical than who it originally attracts. "For this reason, training must be viewed as an organizational essential, rather than the company extra. (p. 96)" Sensitizing personnel to better customer service is not likely to occur if it is perceived as an after-though or passing fad with neither institutional commitment or resources behind it.

While training plays an important part in making organizations

manageable (Nigro and Nigro, 1986), the concurrent emphasis on self-development and the organizational requirements can bear significantly from a customer service perspective. Because frontline staff, such as secretaries, clerks and counter workers, interact with students on a regular basis, their performance is critical to student/customer services. Thus, staff development training at this level often can have twin goals of improving the level of service to students and of enhancing morale and work environment (Borelli, 1984).

Of the four organizational functions for which training should be designed, customer service training aimed at shaping attitudes and perceptions of personnel appears to require the socialization function perhaps more than production, adaptation or coordination. As Sylvia and Meyer point out:

> "Government agencies frequently engage in continuing service activities, the productivity of which is difficult to quantify...Profit is generally irrelevant in government where the emphasis is more likely to be on efficiency, equity and effectiveness. Socialization in government...should emphasize a client service organization coupled with the maintenance of the highest personal and professional standards for one's work...(p. 139)"

Traditional training methods involve lectures, seminars, workshops which, because of time and expense, often take place at the agency. External training, because of the above mentioned constraints, is less likely at a community college which has the facilities for on-site training. Interviews with college personnel, which is supported by other research, indicates that

professional training consultants should come from outside the college rather than using trainers from within the college ranks. This is deemed necessary to encourage involvement, participation and assure a level of credibility in the eyes of the college personnel.

Using the Process Toward Service

OWCC has a resource already at its disposal in the Staff and Program Development process. The college personnel director can initiate the process by having top management identify customer service training as an institutional priority. An analysis of external and internal customer service can obtained through a institutionwide effort to shape a bonifide customer service mission statement. This would involve incorporating the development of departmental service standards. The personnel director would then formulate a request for Staff and Development Program funds.

The proposal should be target at the "level where transactions are consummated." Where is this level, according to Mescon and Mescon:

> "Most consumers only encounter the lower level of organizations. To these customers, the rest of the structure is irrelevant...all that really count, all that truly matters, is the quality of information, service, and delivery at the level of the organization where buyer meets seller. It is at this lowest level of the firm where training is most important. However, it is at this same lowest level of the firm where management generally place the least amount of resources and the least amount of effort. Training at this level can make the difference between satisfying or alienating customers. (p. 94)"

Thus, even in a time of revenue shortfall, the college has the opportunity to at least develop the beginnings of its service management. Whether it is made a more prominent part of new employee orientation or meshed into a development program for promotion, customer service training needs to be initiated and it needs to be continuous.

Recognition and Service Measures

There are two components which have significant capacity for demonstrating that the college administration is serious about customer service. First, a method to recognize both external and internal service delivery efforts has both immediate and sustained value for the institution. Second, determining if the college is providing the level of service its external clients expect and the internal clients require takes some form of measurement. Indeed, recognition and measurement of service may go hand-in-hand.

First, consider recognition. Identifying and rewarding exemplary customer service performance are part of the feedback the college can give to personnel. The value general exceeds the cost. And as for an initiative like customer service, Peters observes:

> "Well constructed recognition settings provide the single most important opportunity to parade and reinforce the specific kinds of new behavior one hopes others will emulate. Thus recognition activities become a key listening and communication device, beyond their straightforward motivational influence on those being recognized (p. 370)."

But how does a public agency like a community college

rationalize to the taxpaying public spending for such incentive-based rewards. It is a vexing issue for public managers, but not one without answers. If spending public dollars is a problem, the college might look to local business and industry to underwrite the incentive program. A local restaurant might provide dinner for the college's service heroes. Whatever the recognition, spotlighting the service performers with their peers is essential. They become the college's role models for service excellence and recruit others do likewise.

What will determine such recognition is equally important. Albrecht (p. 223) warns about making service performance measures that are fair and equitable. The college must devise what Horovitz (p. 70) terms a service quality standard which must be based on customer needs. In this way, there is a guarantee of conformity. every employee should know what to do, how to do it and why it is important. Horovitz notes:

> "Service quality standards must be operational throughout an organization...The closer the standard gets to the person who actually serves the public the more its components must be broken down into specific requirements. This practice will ensure the fullest customer satisfaction (p. 74)."

Developing service standards should take place collegewide. It can begin on a modest scale assessing service-related objectives for two or three departments and grow to include other incrementally. Coming up with the specific standard takes looking at what the college considers general service and expanding it, depending on the tasks to be performed, methods to be used and the

results for the customer.

Measuring and evaluating the institution's customer service dimensions by surveying and listening to the customers themselves has been a shortfall of the public sector. As Peters points out:

> "Many public sector managers are reluctant to see such feedback because they are afraid it will be too expensive to deal with, will open up a can of worms, and will result in suggestions that will be beyond their bailiwick...If you sample regularly, and respond quickly, you will inundated with small, practical, generally inexpensive--and implementable--ideas. Then both you and the customer/citizen win (p 129)."

Implications and Prospects

This paper has demonstrated that together community college personnel and their institutions have a vital stake in customer service delivery to student clientele. While there has been only peripheral awareness by public sector colleges and universities of their responsibility and role as service agencies, the service-oriented marketplace is forcing higher education to rethink its function.

This analysis had shown that service is interpreted from at least two levels. The student, as the external service customer, and the college personnel, as the internal service customer, have needs and expectations. The paper has described components which are necessary for the college to build and sustain a service-oriented motivation. Likewise, the traits and abilities required of the institution's personnel must be enhanced through a

management-supported and funded training program. Methods also have been prescribed for evaluating and rewarding customer service performance.

Although the research indicates the college is viewed by students as providing satisfactory services, the environment and the rating is subject to change with the next wave of enrollments. Therefore, what may have worked in the past may not in the future. The college needs to adopt a more proactive customer service approach, both externally and internally. There are clearly payoffs for both the institution and employees.

The college needs a specific service philosophy, service quality standards for personnel to achieve and surpass and training programs which make customer service a recognized part of the institutional fabric. There is clearly a challenge and an opportunity for community colleges to take the lead in focusing the attention of public higher education institutions on being more responsive and innovative in the service management arena.

Bibliography and References

Albrecht, Karl. At America's Service: How Corporations Can Revolutionize the Way They Treat Their Customers. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin. 1988.

Borelli, Frank L. "Staff Development for Nonprofessional Personnel." Journal of College Student Personnel, 25, 4. July 1984.

Burdzinski, Kenneth, Comptroller, Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Niceville, FL. Interviewed by the author, April 2, 1991.

Downs, George W., and Patrick D. Larkey. The Search for Government Efficiency: From Hubris to Helplessness. New York: Random House. 1986.

Finley, Charles E. "Future Directions and Needs." In "Issues in Personnel Management." Edited by R. I. Miller and E.W. Holzapfel. New Directions for Community Colleges, No. 62. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Summer 1988.

Gordon, George J. Public Administration in America. 3rd Ed. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1986.

Haag-Mutter, Priscilla, and C. Wayne Jones. "The Personnel Function in Two-Year Colleges." In "Issues in Personnel Management." Edited by R.I. Miller and E.W. Holzapfel. New Directions for Community Colleges, No. 62. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Summer 1988.

Hall, William T., Personnel Director, Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Niceville, FL. Interviewed by the author April 2, 1991.

Hartnagel, Douglas. "Supporting the Support Staff." College and University, Summer 1986. pp. 275-281.

Hicks, William D., and Richard J. Klimoski. "Entry Into Training Programs and Its Effects on Training Outcomes: A Field Experiment." Academy of Management Journal, 30, 3. September 1987. pp. 542-552.

Horovitz, Jacques. Winning Ways: Achieving Zero-Defect Service. Cambridge, MA.: Productivity Press. 1990.

James, Annabelle, Director of Student Services, Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Niceville, Fl. Interviewed by the author April 4, 1991.

Karabatsos, Nancy A. "The State of Quality: What the Numbers Say." Quality. March 8, 1991. pp. 27-38.

Klingner, Donald E., and John Nalbandian. Public Personnel Management: Context and Strategies. 2nd Ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1985.

McIntire, Dave D. "A Theory Z Application for Student Affairs Administrators." Journal of College Student Personnel, 24, 6. November 1983. pp. 565-567.

Marciano, Paul L., and John E. Kello. "Staff Training and Development in Academic Organizations." CUPA Journal. Summer 1990. pp. 35-42.

Mescon, Michael H., and Timothy S. Mescon. "Training, Dues-Paying and Profits." Sky 16, 12. December 1987. pp. 92-96.

Nigro, Felix A., and Lloyd G. Nigro. The New Public Personnel Administration. 3rd Ed. Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers Inc. 1986.

Okaloosa-Walton Community College, ACT Student Opinion Survey (2-Year College Form), February 1991.

Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Student Services Survey, December 1990.

Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Student Handbook 1990-91.

Pastor, Joan, with Risa Gechtman. "Nurturing the Teamwork Culture: Internal Customer Service." Supervisory Management. April 1991.

Phillips, Stephen, and Amy Dunkin. "King Customer: At Companies That Listen Hard and Respond Fast, Bottom Lines Thrive.: Business Week, March 12, 1990. pp. 88-94.

Perry, James L., and Lois Recascino-Wise. "The Motivational Bases for Public Service." Public Administration Review, 50, 3. May/June 1990. pp. 367-373.

Peters, Tom. Thriving On Chaos: A Handbook for a Management Revolution. New York: Harper & Row. 1988.

Rafaeli, Anat. "When Cashiers Meet Customers: Am Analysis of the Role of Supermarket Customers." Academy of Management Journal, 32, 2. June 1989. pp. 245-273.

Rafaeli, Anat. Busy Stores and Demanding Customers: How Do They Affect the Display of Positive Emotion." Academy of Management Journal, 33, 3. September 1990. pp. 623-637.

Romzek, Barbara S. "Employee Investment and Commitment: The Ties That Bind." Public Administration Review, 50, 3. May/June 1990. pp. 374-382.

Schembera, Jeff, Dean of Administrative Services, Okaloosa-Walton Community College, Niceville, FL. Interviewed by the author April 4, 1991.

Sobel, Stuart, and Gary Hines. "Cray's New Focus On Customers." Personnel Journal. November 1990. pp. 59-63.

Stahl, O. Glenn. The Personnel Job of Government Managers. Chicago, IL: International Personnel Management Association. 1971.

"Staff and Program Development Plan 1990-1995." OWCC Master Plan and Institutional Measures of Effectiveness. Niceville, FL: Okaloosa-Walton Community College. August 1990.

Sylvia, Ronald D., and C. Kenneth Meyer. "An Organizational Perspective on Training and Development in the Public Sector." In Public Personnel Administration: Problems and Prospects. 2nd Ed. Edited by Steven W. Hays and Richard C. Kearney. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1990.

Webster, Richard Scott. "A Management Team Approach to Institutional Renewal." Educational Record. Summer 1979. pp. 241-252.

Wildavsky, Aaron. "Ubiquitous Anomie: Public Service in an Era of Ideological Dissensus." Public Administration Review, 48, 4. July/August 1988. pp. 753-755.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1987.

APPENDICES

ACT Student Opinion Survey

Okaloosa-Walton Community College
February 1991
(N=195)

Table 1. Rating of College at Time of Admissions

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice
Male	95/75.4%	20/16.4%	5/4.0%	3/2.4%
Female	56/82.4%	12/17.6%	0/0%	0/0%
Total	151/77.9%	32/16.4%	5/2.6%	3/1.5%

Table 2. Overall Impression of Quality of Education at OWCC

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Avg.
Male	45/35.7%	59/46.8%	15/11.9%	1/.08%
Female	37/54.4%	26/38.2%	3/4.4%	1/1.5%
Total	82/42.1%	86/44.1%	18/9.2%	2/1.0%

Table 3. Satisfaction with Academic Advising/Counseling Service

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat	Very Dis.
Male	14/21.5%	32/49.2%	14/21.5%	3/4.6%	2/3.1%
Female	20/39.2%	21/41.2%	5/9.8%	5/9.8%	0/0%
Total	34/29.3%	53/45.7%	19/16.4%	8/6.9%	2/1.7%

Table 4. Satisfaction with Library Resources and Services

	Very Sat.	Sat.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	34/38.6%	44/50%	8/9.1%	2/2.3%	0/0%
Female	31/51.7%	24/40%	4/6.7%	0/0%	1/1.7%
Total	65/43.9%	68/45.9%	12/8.1%	2/1.4%	1/.7%

Table 5. Satisfaction with Cafeteria/Food Services

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	11/17.5%	41/65.1%	10/15.9%	0/0%	1/1.6%
Female	11/22.4%	28/57.1%	8/16.3%	2/4.1%	0/0%
Total	22/19.6%	69/61.6%	18/16.1%	2/1.8%	1/0.9%

Table 6. Use of Cultural Activities at the College

	Used	Not Used
Male	17/13.5%	99/76.9%
Female	15/22.1%	51/75.0%
Total	32.16.4%	150/76.9%

Table 7. Satisfaction with Out-of-class Availability of Instructor

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	35/27.8%	48/38.1%	34/27.0%	1/0.8%	0/0%
Female	29/42.6%	23/33.8%	13/19.1%	2/2.9%	0/0%
Total	64/32.8%	71/36.4%	47/24.1%	3/1.5%	0/0%

Table 8. Satisfaction with Attitude of Teaching Staff to Students

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	52/41.3%	60/46.2%	8/6.3%	1/0.8%	2/1.6%
Female	32/47.1%	30/44.1%	5/7.4%	1/1.5%	0/0%
Total	84/43.1%	90/46.2%	13/6.7%	2/2.0%	2/1.0%

Table 9. Satisfaction with the Aavailability of Your Advisor

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	27/21.4%	52/41.3	30/23.8%	6/4.8%	2/1.6%
Female	25/36.8%	30/44.1%	8/11.8%	1/1.5%	1/1.5%
Total	52/26.7%	82/42.1%	32/19.5%	7/3.6%	3/1.5%

Table 10. Satisfaction with General Admission/Entry Procedures

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	22/17.5%	69/54.8%	24/19.0%	6/4.8%	3/2.4%
Female	23/33.8%	32/47.1%	11/16.2%	0/0%	1/1.5%
Total	45/23.1%	101/51.8%	35/17.9%	6/3.1%	4/2.1%

Table 11. Satisfaction with Information Before Enrolling

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	18/14.3%	62/49.2%	33/26.2%	5/4.0%	4/3.2%
Female	23/33.8%	29/42.6%	12/17.6%	1/1.5%	0/0%
Total	41/21.0%	91/46.7%	45/23.1%	6/3.1%	4/2.1%

Table 12. Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by College Staff with Entering

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	27/21.4%	57/45.2%	27/21.4%	6/4.8%	3/2.4%
Female	20/29.4%	33/48.5%	11/16.2%	1/1.5%	1/1.5%
Total	47/24.1%	90/46.2%	38/19.5%	7/3.6%	4/2.1%

Table 13. Satisfaction with General Registration Procedure

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	20/15.9%	71/56.3%	20/15.9%	8/4.1%	5/4.0%
Female	27/39.7%	29/42.6%	7/10.3%	2/2.9%	1/1.5%
Total	47/24.1%	100/51.3%	27/13.8%	8/4.1%	6/3.1%

Table 14. Satisfaction with Parking Facilities and Services

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	16.14,0%	53/46.5%	24/21.1%	12/10.5%	7/6.1%
Female	14/21.5%	28/43.1%	12/18.5%	8/12.3%	3/4.6%
Total	30/16.8%	81/45.3%	36/20.1%	20/11.2%	10/5.6%

Table 15. Satisfaction with College's Concern for You as an Individual

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	18/14.3%	56/44.4%	42/33.3%	2/1.6%	4/3.2%
Female	22/32.4%	28/42.2%	15/22.1%	3/4.4%	0/0%
Total	40/20.5%	84/43.1%	57/29.2%	5/2.6%	4/2.1%

Table 16. Satisfaction with Non-teaching Staff Toward Students

	Very Sat	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	12/9.5%	60/44.6%	32/25.4%	6/4.8%	2/1.6%
Female	22/32.4%	27/39.7%	13/19.1%	0/0%	0/0%
Total	34/17.4%	87/44.6%	45/23.1%	6/3.1%	2/1.0%

Table 17. Satisfaction with College in General

	Very Sat.	Satisf.	Neutral	Dissat.	Very Dis.
Male	41/32.5%	62/49.2%	15/11.9%	1/0.8%	3/2.4%
Female	36/52.9%	30/44.1%	2/2.9%	0/0%	0/0%
Total	77/39.5%	92/47.2%	17/8.7%	1/0.5%	3/1.5%